His Car Needs No Licence . . .

DISCOVERY ISLAND'S

KING OF THE ISLANDERS is "Capt." Ernest Godfrey Beaumont.

An islander's islander, he has been the owner of Discovery Island and monarch of the splendor of its seascapes for 42 years.

His sea-encircled kingdom — position 48° 25' 32" N 123° 14' W—measures 160 acres. Some 90 acres at the south is Indian reservation and four acres belong to the Crown, for the site of Discovery Light.

Right now, Capt. Beaumont is in the act of deciding whether he will leave his island to the Queen, and thus to the people of British Columbia. He has had many offers for its mile and an eighth of forest abundance but, "I feel I should present it to the province as a permanent park," he says.

In his 85th year, one still hesitates to apply the word "old" to this good gentleman, for despite his white hair and slight figure, he can still weary many a younger man.

On a calm day he often takes his dingy and rows across Baynes Channel's tricky waters to Ten Mile Point—and then takes a walk.

On rough days, he rows around his island, or Chatham Island—an exercise that takes him about one hour and ten minutes.

Due to an old injury from school days, Capt. Beaumont has one stiff leg and of latter years has had to walk with two canes. However, with his two sticks he strides over rocks, wharves and hills at a pace which keeps anyone with him lagging in the rear.

For quick trips from his big house on the south side to the landing for his powerful 30' launch, Discovery Isle II, on the other side, Capt. Beaumont drives a convertible, sea-green Morris Minor.

It's his island. He built the road and keeps it up—and it is his delight that he is possibly the only person in B.C. who doesn't have to buy licence plates for his car. To further his pleasure, the gas for it is tax-free.

HOST OF VISITORS

It is half a mile from the boat landing to the house, but it is possible to take a two and a half-mile car ride up to the lighthouse and around the island on "Beaumont Road."

In spots at high tide, the tires get a little wet and at other times Capt. Beaumont is likely to shout, "Duck your head and watch for overhanging branches!" This only adds to the joy of riding in a licence-free car and being invited to Discovery.

OVER THE YEARS thousands and thousands of people have been welcomed to Discovery.

By Capt. Beaumont's own count, there have been at least 20,000.

These have included, apart from "personal visitors," University School boys, Boy Scouts and Cubs, Sea Cadets, Air Cadets, Army Cadets, and Cathedral Choir boys.

Some of them have come to visit and stayed 10 weeks.

It all started the very year he bought the island—in 1918.

One day in June, 1918, the headmaster of the University School told Beaumont that he had 14 boys left in the school who would have to stay right through the summer holidays.

"Send them to me," said the captain.

"The 14 came—one of them is now Brig. F. N. Cabeldu—and they stayed 10 weeks. They camped in tents and my Chinese cook and I and my wife cooked the food. We had a storm one night and we put everyone up in the house. It was a very happy time for all of us."

And that was the way it began. One year alone there were 1,500 such come-and-go guests. Last year he had 19 University School Scouts at one time. One weekend he had 100 Navy, Army and Air Cadets for "manoeuvres."

Another time last year, he had the Christ Church Cathedral Choir boys for several days. Some had tents and others slung hammocks in the trees in front of the house. On Sunday Dean Brian Whitlow draped a white cloth over a giant tree stump, the boys donned their garments, and there was a full open-air church service.

Capt. Beaumont ferries his guests over from the Victoria Yacht Club to his island himself, keeping a watchful eye at the helm.

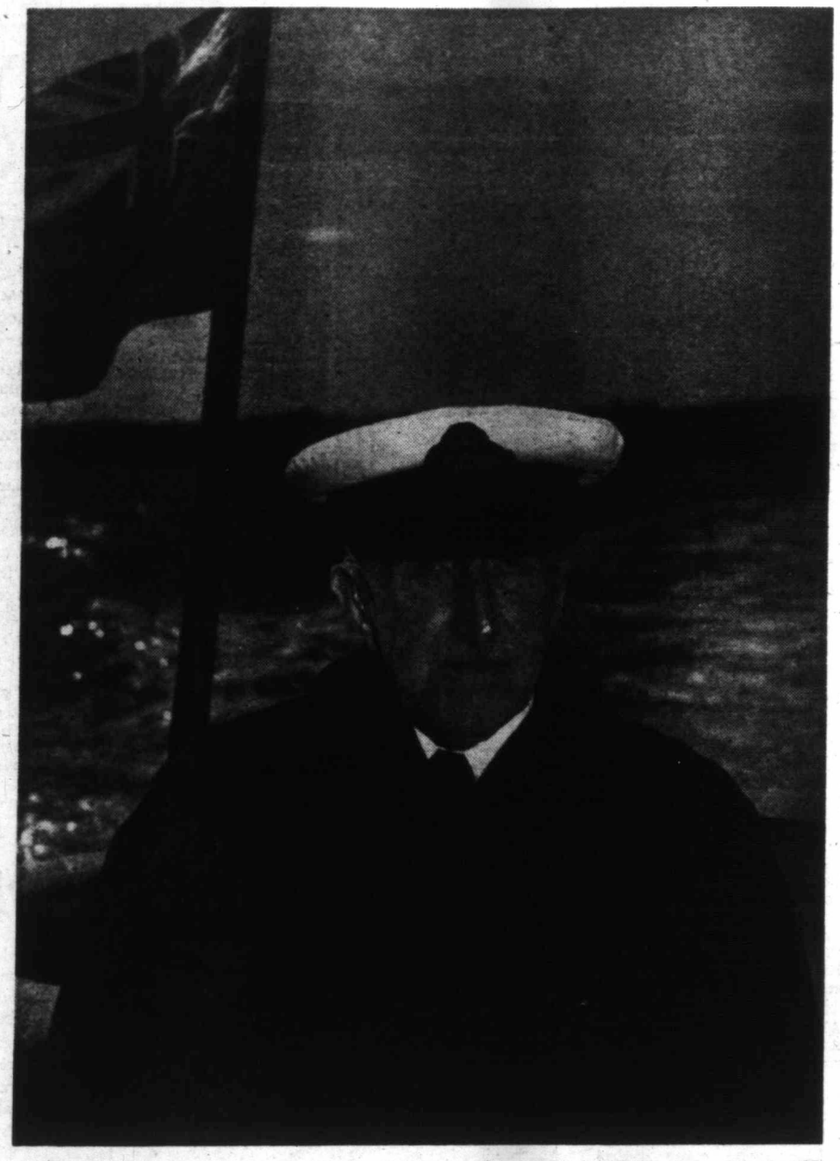
"Never lost a boy," he said. "One or two fell overboard from time to time, but the others all enjoyed the spectacle so much no one minded the dunking."

Another joy in owning one's island is the question of time.

"We run on summer time here all winter," says the owner firmly. "And in the summer we run on double summer time.

"This never fails to surprise the boys who come here to visit . . . I tell them it is because we are east of Victoria and therefore the sun rises sooner."

The lord-of-all-he-surveys on Discovery is not really a captain, and is the first one to make this clear. However, in 1925 he had a very fine all-teakwood yacht built in Hong Kong, 48 feet from stem to stern, 22 tons, and this he christened "Discovery Isle I."



This is Ernest Godfrey Beaumont, master of his own fast craft and of Discovery Island. This is a man who loves the sea, and would have made seafaring his calling, if he could. His is an honored name. —Islander Photos by Bill Boucher.